

# Texas Law Help.org 2.0

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# Thank you.

- \* Thank you for your service to the community.

# www.texaslawhelp.org

- **Purpose:** Provide information about civil legal issues to low-income Texans.
- A wide variety of information is available including the following subjects:
  - Family
    - ✦ Forms
    - ✦ Texas Protective Order Kit
  - Consumer
  - Housing
  - How to find a lawyer/legal aid
  - Where to file court forms

# TexasLawHelp.org History

- \* TexasLawHelp.org has been active since 2001.
- \* It is a template driven website, and the templates are shared by other states – they are created by ProBono.net.
- \* The LawHelp.org system has been created for people living on low-incomes and the legal organizations that serve them.
- \* LawHelp.org provides referrals to local legal aid and public interest law offices, basic information about legal rights, self-help information, court information, and links to social service agencies.

# Who are we?

- \* TexasLawHelp.org falls under Texas Legal Services Center's Self-Represented Litigants Project. The website was initially funded by the Legal Services Corporation and receives continued support from the Texas Access to Justice Foundation.
- \* Partners include the Travis County Law Library, which provides most of the self-help forms available on the website.
- \* Other partners include the legal aid organizations that receive funding from the Texas Access to Justice Foundation.

# TexasLawHelp.org usage

- \* In 2011, TexasLawHelp.org was visited by more than 300,000 users.
- \* There are more than 1000 resources, including do-it-yourself forms, available on TexasLawHelp.org.
- \* 95% of visitors to TLH are seeking information on divorce.

# What is available on TexasLawHelp.org?

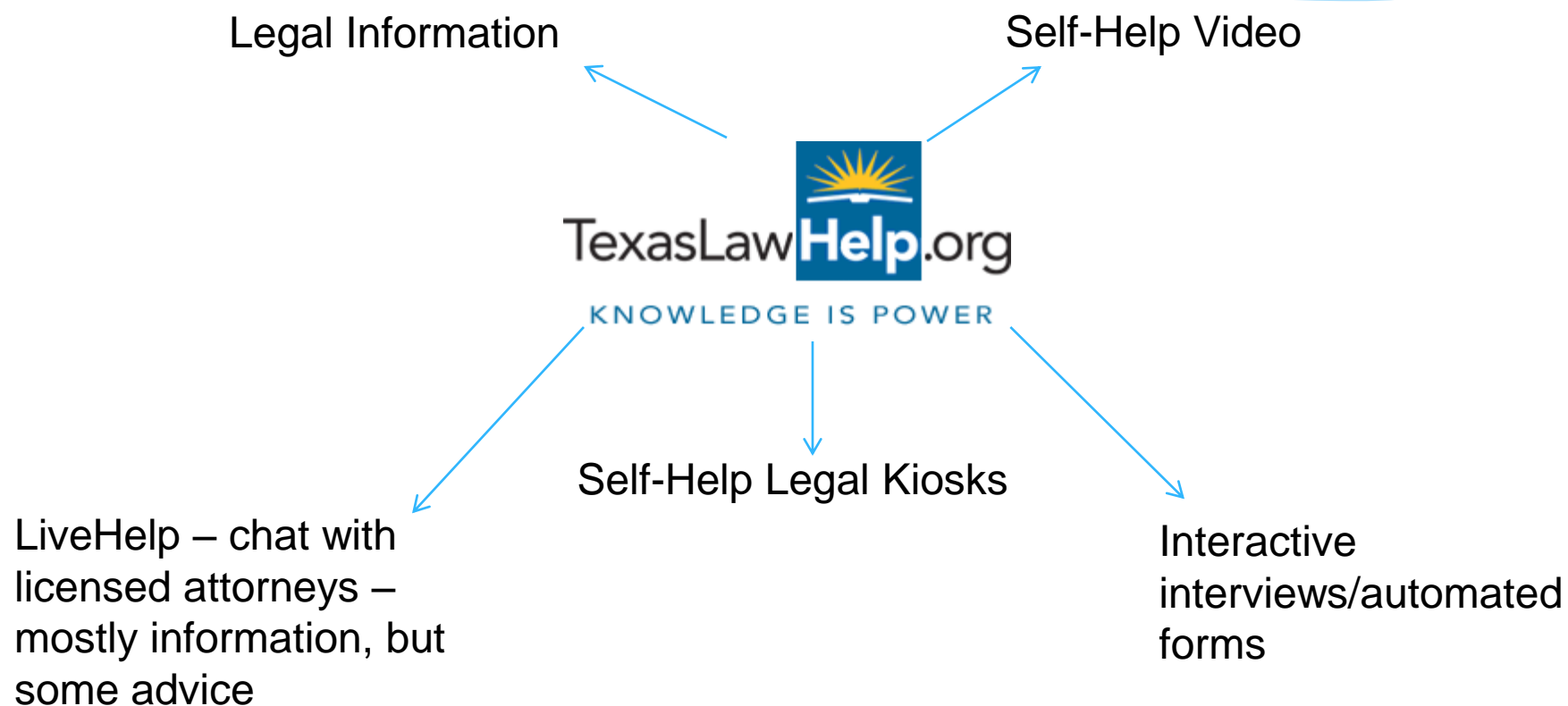
- Self-represented litigants can access interactive interviews/automated forms, similar to TurboTax, that guide them through a series of questions and allow them to print a set of professional looking documents with instructions for filing in court.
- Visitors to the website have the opportunity to chat with an attorney Monday through Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm.
- There is a Civil Courts Directory that helps individuals who cannot afford an attorney figure out where to file their paperwork.
- People who do not have home computers are able to access the website at law libraries, public libraries, and kiosks in a few courthouses, such as at the Hidalgo County Law Library and the Lubbock County courthouse. Or at places like Austin Free-Net.

# Website Redesign

- \* We launched the new website on September 2012.
- \* We have improved search functions so visitors can find the information they need more quickly.
- \* We are working with UT law students to update materials.
- \* We are also redesigning our collateral material -- if you need brochures or mouse pads, contact Colton Lawrence at [clawrence@tlsc.org](mailto:clawrence@tlsc.org).



# How we do it:



# Legal Information vs. Legal Advice

# What is Legal Advice?

A statement that:

- \* Interprets the law or court procedures;
- \* Gives a specific course of action a person should take to solve a legal problem; or
- \* Applies the law to a person's specific fact situation.

# What is Legal Information?

Legal information is general information about the law, about where to find the law, legal definitions, legal rules, or where to find legal help.

# What's the Difference?

- \* Legal information is general in nature.
- \* Legal advice is fact specific or person specific, i.e., legal advice is the application of law or legal principles to an individual's situation.

# Why is this Important?

- \* Any knowledgeable person can give legal information.
- \* Only a licensed attorney can give legal advice.

# Legal Information Examples

- \* Showing a patron how to use Texas Law Help;
- \* Giving a patron the phone number for their local legal aid office or lawyer referral program;
- \* Explaining to a patron that divorces are handled in the civil courts or that an arrest for theft will be handled in a criminal court.

# Legal Advice Examples

- \* Showing a person how to calculate the child support in their divorce;
- \* Helping a person to write their will;
- \* Telling a person that they have a valid claim or cause of action.



# Critical Question

Does the information I am giving apply generally to anyone in the same situation, or does it apply specifically to this patron?

# Example

Pat asks you whether he can fix his stove and deduct the charge from his rent.

You CAN:

- \* show Pat how to find the Texas Property Code;
- \* find the relevant Code section and read it to Pat;
- \* help him use the Live Help feature on Texas Law Help; or
- \* refer him to his local legal aid or a tenant's council website

You CAN'T:

- \* review his lease and interpret it for him;
- \* advise him to go ahead with his plan (or not)